

Information

How many homosexuals I've come to know! This good old Puntan city, has them by the hundreds.

An anonymous letter written by a Bostonian in 1907 to the **Scientific Humanitarian Committee**, the German group believed to be the first gay emancipation group in history.

Bay Village and the Theatre District

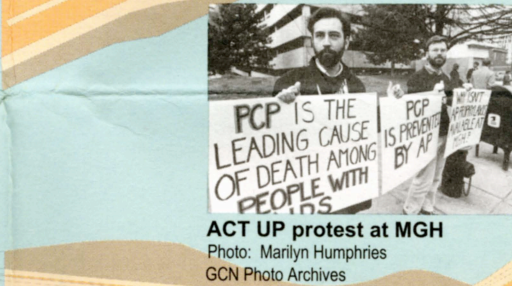
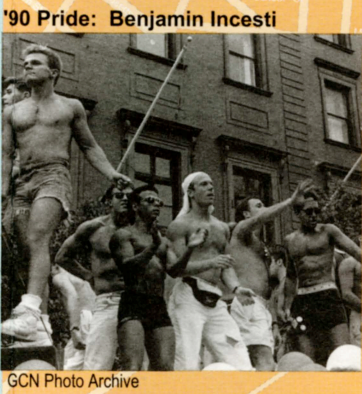
- 1 **The Napoleon Club**-52 Piedmont St.- Opened in 1929, The Napoleon Club is a piece of living history. Housing a homosexual subculture in the '40s, it became exclusively gay in 1952. The dignified piano bar, with gilded wallpaper and uniformed bartenders, seems immune to vagaries of fashion. Regular crooners have been joined by such luminaries as **Liberace** and the Queen of Queens herself, Judy Garland, who visited the club every night for a week shortly before her suicide.
- 2 **The Punchbowl**-232 Stuart St.- It was the place to be on the day of the annual Beaux Arts Ball, and on any given night one could expect a waiting line of several hundred. As one of Boston's best known early gay bars, a typical crowd in the '50s and '60s would be heavy on students, with some drag queens, hustlers and professionals. It closed in 1970 when the property was bought by the city.
- 3 **Park Square and the Greyhound Bus Station** formed a hub of gay action in the late '50s and early '60s. Located in the Statler building was the **Hayes Bickford**, a popular after hours gay club in the '50s. **John Preston** described his experiences in Park Sq. as a teenage hustler. "I was given a great deal of affection by the men I found in the alleys off Park Sq. I was guarded by a flock of black drag queens who just loved to mother a young boy from the country." The queens of Park Sq. became models for characters in his novel, *Franny, the Queen of Provincetown*.
- 4 **Jacques**-79 Broadway- Opening iits doors in 1939, Jacques was a popular lesbian establishment in the early '70s. In 1975 it began having the drag shows that, along with a strong cross-dressing crowd are now its trademark.
- 5 **The Other Side**-78 Broadway - Opened from 1965-76, it was the bar to go to in its day. Among the many performers appearing there were **David Bowie**, and drag sensation **Sylvia Sidney**.

Downtown

- 6 **Cavana's**-335 Tremont St. NLS- A women's bar in the '50s, **Cavana's** clientele included many out, self-identified and rough lesbians. When it was threatened with closure by the Alcohol Licensing Board unless the "girls" wore skirts, patrons took the brave, and for that time, unusual step of picketing the police station.
- 7 **Carver St. NLS**- Carver ran through what is now the Transportation Building, and is the site of two gay landmarks. Opened in 1959, **12 Carver** was a venerable piano bar. Upstairs was the early leather bar, **Herbie's Ramrod Room**, precursor to the **Boston Ramrod** now located on Boylston St. [44]. At 18 Carver was the **Lundin Turkish Baths**, known as "Our Lady of the Vapors." It is reputed to have been visited by Malcom X immediately upon his release from prison.
- 8 **Parkman Bandstand**-Boston Common- On June 18, 1977 Gay Pride Rally keynote speaker Charles Shively staged an infamous display of radicalism. In condemnation of Prudential Insurance for not allowing him to list his lover on his policy, he burned the document. Also burned were copies of his Harvard diploma and the state sodomy laws. Finally, after reading from the Bible the condemnation of homosexuality in Leviticus, it also was burned. This action spurred heated debate within the lesbian and gay community.
- 9 **Tremont Temple**- Shortly before her death in 1993 to breast cancer, poet **Audre Lorde** was honored in a conference here for her work in the struggles for the civil rights of lesbians and women of color. Hundred's of people from all over the U.S. attended this event which was organized by Boston lesbians. Down the street at the Music Hall [45] on Winter and Tremont streets, **Oscar Wilde** delivered his second Boston lecture.
- 10 **Playland**-21 Essex St.- Described by its manager as a bar for "drugs, drugs and dysfunctionals," Playland is the oldest continually operating gay bar in Boston. Opened in 1937, it has attracted a gay clientele since the '40s. Despite a "perennial Christmas-in-the-dungeon" decor, Playland has a history of good works, serving Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners to homeless gays since 1950.
- 11 **Club La Grange Bath**-4 Lagrange St.- Unused but recently renovated, this H.H. Richardson building held Boston's outlet of the Club Bath chain. Remembered by writer **Michael Bronski**, who worked there as a towel boy 1978-79, for its lunchtime businessmen crowd, Club LaGrange was at the forefront of pre-AIDS gay health concerns in offering weekly VD testing.
- 12 **22 Bromfield St.**- A mid-70's gay community center of sorts, 22 Bromfield provided space for such groups as the **Glad Day Bookshop**, which can now be found at 673 Boylston[46]. **Boston Asian Gay Men and Lesbians**, the first gay asian group in North America ; the **Black Men's Caucus**; the **Committee for Gay Youth**; and **Lesbian and Gay Media Advocates**. Also housed here were **Gay Community News**, **Fag Rag** (an important journal), and the first meeting of the **Boston Area Lesbian & Gay History Project** in February 1980. Its bathroom is recalled as perhaps the only co-gender public sex spot in the city. A fire, reputedly at the hands of Boston fire fighters, ended its history as queer space. At 30 Bromfield St. was **Other Voices**, Boston's first gay bookstore.
- 13 **Pilgrim Theater**-658 Washington- Built in 1912, this combat zone porn movie house is the oldest continually operating theater in Boston. Its site is now slated for demolition and redevelopment.
- 14 **Jolar Cinema**- Essex and Washington- The 1975 arrest of a radio personality and gay activist here for open and lewd behavior resulted in the an important public sex court ruling. The defense successfully argued that because the defendant's actions took place behind closed doors they were private. The **Jolar** closed in 1980.
- 15 **Somewhere**-295 Franklin St.- From 1977 through the mid-'90s, this was the lesbian bar in Boston. Managed by former Liason to the Gay and Lesbian Community and Chief of Health and Human Services, **Ann Maguire**, it was a major stop on the lesbian folk music circuit, and the site of many hot nights of dancing. Closed due to fire in '83, it reopened as **Somewhere Else**. Upstairs was a men's health club/bath, the **Spa Over Somewhere**.

- 1648 The Massachusetts Body of Laws and Liberties was published in 1648, and was the first collection of laws in the colonies. Execution was madated for the crime of "sodomy." After the unification of the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay Colonies, a 1697 revision to this statute includes references to bestiality, and renames the crime "buggery." *An Act for the Punishment of Buggery* was drafted to read, "...And that every Man, being duly convicted of lying with Mankind, as he lieth with a Woman; and every Man or Woman that shall have carnal Copulation with any Beast or Brute Creature, the Offender and Offenders, in either of the Cases before mentioned, shall suffer the Pains of Death, and the Beast shall be slain and burnt." Buggery was a capital crime in Massachusetts until 1805.
- 1642 Elizabeth Johnson, a servant in Essex County, Massachusetts, was sentenced to be fined and "severely whipped" for "unseemly practices" with another maid, and for "stubbornness to her mistress" and "stopping her ears...when the Word of God was read."

- 1786 The first house on Pinckney St., now number five, was erected by a "mulatto barber" named Louis Clapion and a Black coachman, George Middleton, a life-long bachelor and a leader of a celebrated all-Black regiment in the Revolutionary War. At his death in 1815, he left all his possessions to "my good friend Trustum Babcock", a mariner who lived on West Cedar St.
- 1850's In Mt. Auburn Cemetary [x] in Cambridge, a sculpture by the prominent 19th century African American / Native American lesbian artist **Edmonia Lewis**[A] can be seen, as well as the grave of her friend **Charlotte Cushman** [1816-1876] who, as the most famous Shakespearean actress of her day, played Romeo to many other actresses' Juliet. She spoke frequently of her numerous intimate relationships with women, the most famous of which was with sculptor **Emma Stebbins**, who wrote Cushman's biography. Another important sculptor and Cushman flame represented at Mt. Auburn is **Harriet Hosmer**, who was buried here in 1908.



- 1971 The first Gay Pride March took place in June of this year. 150 participants met at **Jacques** in Bay Village and paraded through the city. Speeches denouncing lesbian and gay persecution were delivered at the police headquarters at Stuart and Berkeley, the State House, and at St. Paul's Cathedral on Tremont Street. The march ended at the Bandstand in Boston Common.
- 37 One of the most important providers of health care to Boston's gay community, the **Fenway Community Health Center** [B] was started as a community based free clinic by **David Scondras** and Linda Beane. Run by volunteers for much of its early years, a gay men's health collective that began in 1973 was the start of Fenway's fulfillment of a mission to serve the health needs of lesbians and gay men. Since the beginning of the epidemic, Fenway has been at the forefront of care for people with AIDS, and conducts research that is both academically important and rooted in the needs of the community. Fenway's new building at 7 Haviland St. was financed partially through the efforts of Gay Labor activists, who held a large scale benefit with Cesar Chavez. Currently, **Men of Color Against AIDS** [MOCCA] meets here.
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- 1974 **Elaine Noble** was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives in this year, becoming the first openly gay person to hold state-wide office in the country. She and **Barney Frank** sponsored the state's gay rights bill the first time it was voted on by the House. This legislation was drafted at Noble's Back-Bay Home, which she shared with then partner, **Rita Mae Brown**, author of *Rubyrfruit Jungle*. Several households of gay men who lived collectively in the Fort Hill section of Roxbury began to call themselves the **Fort Hill Faggotts for Freedom**. Instrumental in neighborhood politics, they helped create a visible gay presence in the city.
- 39 The **Charles Street Meeting House** at 70 Charles Street was throughout the 1970s one of the most active gay community centers in the city. The first issue of **Gay Community News** was printed here, and weekly dances were sponsored by the **Gay Liberation Front**. One of the first programs for gay teens, **Project Lambda**, met here ;supported in part by federal funding and run through the mayor's office. This was also the site of the **Meetinghouse Coffeehouse**, a cafe popular among mid-70's gay libbers.
- 41
- 1985

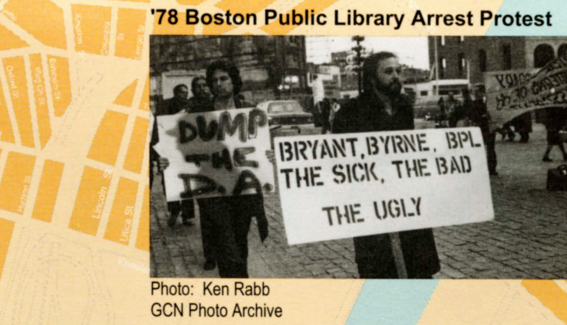


- 1900 Now one of Boston's foremost cultural institutions, what is now the **Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum** was known as the point of liaison between hetero and homo Boston. Isabella Stewart Gardner's circle of friends included U.S. Representative, **A. Piatt Andrew**; **Henry Sleeper**, the foremost interior decorator of the day; and architect **Ralph Adams Cram** [x]. Her closest friend was the painter **John Singer Sargent** [1856-1925] who, when Gardner's Venetian style pallazzo was completed in 1904, made a studio out of the Gothic Room, where his famous portrait of Gardner now hangs. Sargent, whose homosexual leanings can perhaps be seen in his nude portrait of his valet, also painted murals in the old rotunda at the Museum of Fine Arts, just next door, and at the Boston Public Library.
- 34 **'78 Pride March** GCN Photo Archive
- '78 Pride March** GCN Photo Archive

See Beacon Hill and Scollay Square Inset Other Side

- 1982 In November of 1982, the first "AIDS Forums" were held at the Fenway Community Health Center. At this time, there were 13 cases of AIDS in Massachusetts, and 5 deaths. On February 16, a group that had been meeting at Fenway officially adopted the name AIDS Action Committee. Presently located at 131 Clarendon St., AAC serves 1400 men, women and children with AIDS and HIV symptomatic disease.
- 41 A report sent to Gov. Michael Dukakis by conservative politician Benjamin Haith, which revealed that two Boston men, David Jean and Don Babbits, were foster parenting two children resulted in the immediate removal of the children from their home. Legislation was then passed by the state prohibiting gay people from becoming foster parents. Groups such as **Foster Equality Defense Committee**, the **Gay and Lesbian Foster Care Association**, the **Greater Boston Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance**, and the **Massachusetts Lesbian and Gay Political Caucus** began to stage rallies and protests denouncing this policy at the State House, City Hall, and the Governor's residence. This policy remained in effect until 1988, when it was rescinded partially by Dukakis.
- 1985

- 1931 The diary of **Richard Cowan**, which is held at the Boston Athenaeum, chronicles a very gay life in the 20's and 30's in Boston. One entry from mentions the Monarch Club [465 Stuart St. 1933-34, and 477 Stuart St. 1935-1937], which may have been a neighborhood forerunner of the more famous and longer-lived **Punchbowl** [2], and the larger cruising, hustling and drag scene at Park Square in the 50's, 60's and 70's. The entry reads, "One night at the Monarch Club I met a boy whom I had seen once before at the Copley Theatre and once on the subway."
- 35 Harvard professor, literary critic, socialist and "father of American Studies" F.O. Matthiessen jumped to his death from a room on the 12th floor of the Hotel Manger in this year. Matthiessen's depression was fueled by the anti-communist and anti-gay witch hunts of the time, and by the death of his lover, painter Russel Cheney. Their 20-year love affair is chronicled in a book of their correspondence, *The Flat and the Devil*. Lesbian writer, May Sarton, used Mattiessen as the basis of her book, *Faithful are the Wounds*
- 1950
- 36



- North End**
- 31 **Elizabeth Bishop**-Lewis Warf- In 1974, Pulitzer Prize winning poet Bishop moved to this early gentrification effort, where she died in 1979. Bishop's lesbianism is now recognized as integral to her poetry.
- 32 **Edith Guerrier**-3A North Bennet St.- In 1910, Guerrier opened the first public library branch in the North End. In her autobiography, *An Independent Woman*, she writes of her long romance with **Edith Brown**, with whom she opened a pottery studio in Brighton in 1915. Free training was offered to young women there, and the pottery Guerrier and Brown produced is now highly prized.



- 1988 In March of this year, members of **Act-Up Boston** staged a protest at Massachusetts General Hospital urging the availability of aerosol pentamidine to people with AIDS. The drug is a prophylaxis for pneumocystis carni pneumonia, an opportunistic infection that kills many people with AIDS. The protest received national attention and helped to speed the release of the drug.
- 42
- 1989 After a sixteen year struggle, the Massachusetts Gay Rights Bill passed the Massachusetts House and Senate, and was signed into law by Governor William Weld. The lesbian and gay community had stepped up actions in the years immediately preceding its passage. In 1988, a "Speak Out" event was held outside the State House by the Massachusetts Lesbian and Gay Political Caucus in which lesbians and gay men gave testimony to discrimination they had suffered because of their sexual orientation, and a massive civil disobedience took place in the the State House in 1989 [a]. Massachusetts was the second state after Wisconsin to pass legislation protecting the civil rights of lesbians and gay men.
- 43

- South End**
- 24 **Denison House**-93 Tyler St. NLS- Founded in 1892 by Wellesley College professor **Vida Dutton Scudder**, settlement houses were created to ease immigrant transition to American culture. Scudder maintained a Boston marriage with **Florence Converse**, author of the lesbian overtone novel *Diana Victrix* [1897]. Settlement houses are widely held to be the birthplace of our modern social service system. Denison House is now located in Uphams Corner, Dorchester.
- 25 **Claddagh Restaurant**-113 Dartmouth St.- Boston's chapter of the **Log Cabin Club**, the national group of conservative gays and lesbians meets here. This chapter grew out of **Michael Duffy's** unsuccessful 1988 bid to unseat state representative Byron Rushing. Duffy was later appointed to head the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination by then newly elected Governor William Weld.
- 26 **Rustlers**-Chandler and Berkeley- Now the gay bar **Fritz**, the appearance of this and other bars in the South End in the early '80's was a visible sign of the increased gay presence in this part of the city. The South End now has the highest per capita population of gay people in Boston. Jamaica Plain, which is the location of the offices for the lesbian feminist journal *Sojourner*, as well as the women's bookstore **Crone's Harvest**, has, along with Somerville, a strong lesbian constituency.
- 27 **Gay Community News**-62 Berkeley St.- At its founding in 1973, GCN was the only national weekly covering gay and lesbian issues. A crucial forum for analysis and debate, GCN helped shape the early lesbian and gay liberation movement. The paper closed due to financial pressure just shy of its 20th anniversary, but returned as a monthly in April of '95. GCN presently operates out of 25 West St.
- 28 **1523 Washington St.**- This is the location of the offices of the newspaper *Bay Windows*, which was founded in 1982 by **Sasha Alyson**. Alyson is also the founder of Alyson Publications, which has published *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, and the first anthology of writings by Black gay men, *In the Life*, which was edited by **Joseph Beam**.
- Fenway**
- 29 **The Shed**-272 Huntington-This popular racially mixed bar was the type of place that defined the leather/denim clone. A '76 guide notes" The interior decor is early farmandhand, but the macho costumery more than compensates. Marlboro Man meets Lexington Lumberjack...bandanas by the score."
- 30 **The Fenway Victory Gardens**- Important to gays as both a community garden and a cruise area, it was the site of controversy recently when the tall reeds which grow there were cut down. In addition to providing cover for encounters between men, the reeds were also a convenient environment for many bashings and murders. In the Fenway Rose Garden is a freestanding memorial to lesbian poet, **Katherine Lee Bates**, author of "America the Beautiful".
- 1994 Gov. William Weld passed the Gay Student Rights Bill, Which protects lesbian and gay youth from discrimination in public schools based on their sexual orientation. The efforts of groups such as **Boston Area Gay and Lesbian Youth**, as well as individuals such as **David LaFontaine** were instrumental in its passage. In May of 1995, the Youth Committee of the Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth sponsored the first annual State-Wide Gay Youth Pride March and Rally.
- An 1993 AIDS prevention ad campaign by the AIDS Action Committee, scheduled to be posted on the MBTA. The MBTA called the ads too controversial, and refused to post them. On Nov. 9, 1994, The First Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the MBTA had violated AAC's First Amendment rights in their refusal to post the ads, and the campaign was installed on busses and trains in December of 1994.

Mayor Tom Menino and the Boston City Council passed domestic partnership legislation, which gives limited rights to gay couples in Boston.

